Jewish Translation History

A Bibliography of Bibliographies and Studies

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With an introductory essay by Gideon Toury

Translation and reflection on translation

A skeletal history for the uninitiated*

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It has become customary to complain that "the role played by the translator in the stimulation and dissemination of ideas" (and various other good things) was "frequently overlooked and seldom acknowledged". Indeed, this is precisely how, not too long ago, the compiler of the present bibliography chose to open his overview of "Translations to and from Hebrew", entitled "Between Western Culture and Jewish Tradition" (Singerman [131]). Little did he guess what he was going to end up with, when he was through searching for bibliographical materials: nominally, over 2600 items, actually a lot more, if everything included in the annotations is also taken into account, not to mention the fields that were totally excluded for various reasons (see Compiler's Preface).

This introductory essay is intended for the newcomer to the field of translation in the Jewish context. I have therefore tried to simplify matters as much as I could without however sounding too simplistic. Actually, the essay is little more than an attempt to present the bare bones (with very few pieces of meet attached to them) of a historical account of that field with a special focus on Hebrew as a target language; not mere stops alone, but also some of the roads connecting them; not just '*facts*', but underlying *processes* too. This account will be interspersed with numerous passages on what has been done in terms of writing about translation, in a certain period or about it. The first history has not yet been written in full, the second one is hardly there at all. The essay is therefore necessarily a rather *personal* view of translation in the Jewish context.

Some useful background

Hebrew started off as one of several Canaanite dialects. It was adopted by the would-be Israelites, who crossed the "fertile crescent" and settled in what would come to be known as the Land of Israel, probably around 1000 BC. They made it their means of communication in lieu of the Aramaic they had allegedly brought

with them, and varieties of this language continued to be used during the periods of national independence (c. 1000 BC — 587 BC and 517 BC — 70 AD). Outside those times, spoken Hebrew was replaced, first by Aramaic and Greek, then — when the Jews were forced to leave their land — by the various languages, east and west, amongst whose speakers they settled. However, wherever Jewish identity was not lost, Hebrew continued to be used, at least as the language of (quasi-oral) religious rites as well as in a limited variety of written functions. Most subsequent uses of the language were thus closely related to restricted domains of Jewish life and culture, but — contrary to some popular beliefs — it never really died. In fact, not only did it the language (actually a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic) retain the prestige associated with its status as the 'Holy Tongue'. More than once it also served as a means of communication between Jews from different places who exchanged letters or who happened to meet face to face. Very often it was the *only* means of mutual understanding they had, be it ever so rudimentary. True, there were several varieties of Hebrew, mainly due to the separate contacts it now had with a multiplicity of different languages, and of different families, at that. It is those traits which remained unchanged which facilitated limited communication; more limited in oral encounters than in written exchanges, to be sure.

In addition, many varieties of 'Jewish languages' gradually emerged, and functioned for a shorter or longer period of time: Yiddish, Judezmo, Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, and many more. Due to their Jewish specificity, these languages were of great help in the preservation of Jewish identity and solidarity in limited areas. Most of the Jewish languages were kinds of 'creoles' based on an amalgamation of elements and structures of the 'Holy Tongue', on the one hand, and different vernaculars on the other. In fact, they all started off as local *spoken* varieties, but some of them gained wider circulation and quite a number were also put to paper, normally using the Hebrew alphabet. Some of the latter even managed to develop a body of *written* texts, original and translated alike. Finally, local languages could also be used by Jews, thus making for a highly complex (and fluctuating) background against which any discussion of translation in the Jewish context should proceed: Translation which would justifiably be regarded as 'Jewish' could have been done into Hebrew (from whichever language); from a local language or Hebrew into a Jewish language; between two different Jewish languages; marginally even between two non-Jewish languages; namely, when the issue and/or the personalities involved had a marked Jewish character. Any one of those alternatives was indeed realized at least once in the 3000 years of Jewish existence, but some were no doubt more common than others.

Like the use of the language itself, translation into Hebrew is characterized by *fragmentation*: Its history was marked by a series of new beginnings, each one charting a set of new routes, to be followed for a limited period of time before being abandoned for yet another set. This inherent discontinuity had two complementary

facets, a chronological and a territorial one: since the centers of Jewish culture kept shifting, a new beginning normally coincided with a territorial change. At least, this was certainly characteristic of the Western traditions, which made the larger contribution to today's Hebrew culture and which have also been submitted to more extensive research. Translational behavior in other parts of the Jewish Diaspora may well have led different lives and its development may well have been partly independent of the center. Unfortunately, our knowledge of this part is still too scanty, and too unsystematic, to support any reliable historical account. This is very clearly reflected by the bibliography too.

Translation during antiquity

"Prehistory"

When was translation into Hebrew first done?

This intriguing question may never be answered in any *particular* way, stating a date or naming a place, a text or a translator, due to the scantiness of direct testimonies in the form of written documents; whether texts assumed to be translations (with or without their sources), or conscious reflections on the activity or its results and the socio-cultural significance thereof. Such documents may have got lost, or there may have never been any documents to begin with. As is so well known, the number of issues reflected on is always higher than the number of those that are dealt with in writing.

By contrast, answering this question *in principle* is very easy, very straightforward, as we know a lot about linguistic diversity in the Middle East in antiquity, alongside of the constant contacts, violent or peaceful, between speakers of different dialects/languages, among them languages of different families altogether (as in the case of Sumerian and Akkadian). It stands to reason that all those were accompanied by a fair amount of (multilateral, but not necessarily symmetrical) translation activity, both oral and written. After all, in situations of this kind, it is simply not the case that everybody learns everybody else's language. Rather, it is typically a select number of individuals, or sometimes small groups, who master [parts of] the languages and act as mediators between the (basically monolingual) native speakers of pairs of them.

Biblical times

It is thus hardly surprising that the Hebrew Bible itself, whose canonized version reflects a process of writing and editing which must have taken centuries, should include a number of clear references to translation, including what would come to

be known in modern times as 'liaison interpreting'; most notably Genesis 42:23, where Joseph's brothers face their long lost brother in Egypt. To be sure, this story testifies to a lot more than the mere fact that linguistic mediation was indeed in use, which is self-evident. It also reflects the awareness of persons-in-the-culture of what the 'rules of the game' are, along with the possibility of manipulating those rules. After all, 'objectively' speaking, neither Joseph nor his brothers were in real need of linguistic mediation, and Joseph, the only one who was aware of the fact, made the best of his edge. A different kind of awareness cum manipulation of the concept of translation, this time by the biblical narrator himself, is presented by the story about the covenant between Jacob and Laban, when the two put up a heap of stones, "and Laban called it Jegar-sahadutta, but Jacob called it Galeed" (Genesis 31:47).

On a more concrete level, several biblical passages reveal traces of actual translation (beyond cases where portions of parallel texts in two languages have come down to us, most notably the excerpt from Cyrus' Declaration in Ezra 1:7–8 [Hebrew] vs. Ezra 5:14 or 6:5 [Aramaic]). Thus, in various books of the Bible there are some unknown, difficult to understand, sometimes utterly 'strange' Hebrew words and expressions whose oddity can be convincingly explained away on the assumption that they represent interference of another, often easy to identify language. On the basis of such evidence, it seems warranted to suggest that quite a number of passages in the biblical text, for instance in the Book of Job, may have been imported from without. Even though no concrete texts which may be taken to have served as immediate sources have been found, and maybe never will, there is quite a lot one can say on the basis of such a 'translation' hypothesis; for instance, that very literal translation as well as 'phonetic transposition' were among the strategies available to language mediators to resolve certain textual-linguistic problems, as is still the case in modern times (e.g. English *barley* → Hebrew *bar-li* [I have grain crops]; English *chorus* → Hebrew (Aramaic) *karoza* [herald]).

This last aspect, which views parts of the Hebrew Bible as a reservoir of manifestations of linguistic mediation of different kinds, has not really been pursued by Bible scholars, linguists or translation scholars in any consistent way. The reason seems obvious: such a view implies that textual portions of this kind are secondary, derived, which is a heavy claim when made with respect to the Word of God.

The Mishnaic period

There can be no doubt that some translation into Hebrew also took place during the early phases of the post-biblical period, as the language surely did not go out of use from one day to the next. However, the actual texts that have come down to us are mainly confined to biblical verses quoted in Mishnaic texts and translated, as part of their interpretative treatment, from the old biblical Hebrew into the new

brand of the language which was in use at the time. Later on, in the Land of Israel as well as in neighboring areas where Jews had settled (most notably Egypt), Jewish translation — here in the narrower sense of the translation of Jewish texts for the use of Jews — started to be carried out *from* Hebrew, mainly into Aramaic and Greek; first orally, and only then, following a long period of struggle and hot debate, in writing. The main objective of this translational endeavor was to render the Scriptures accessible to the less learned ? women, small children and uneducated (or less educated) male adults — so as to enable them to follow the services.

Mishnaic literature also contains many important, albeit brief observations on the nature of translation and proper vs. improper ways of performing it, as well as on the status of translating, translators and translated texts in the Jewish culture of the time. It is important to realize that, even though Jewish translation was now applied first and foremost to the Scriptures, an overall attitude, basically negative, one that regards translation as such as inferior, has crystallized, which remained in force for generations to come; in certain Jewish circles probably until this very day. "Always respect — always suspect", as today's speakers of Hebrew might have put it. That is, give it all the respect it may deserve, but never your full trust.

This period, which was rich in manifestations of both translation and reflection on it, later became one of the most researched fields, especially the translation of the Bible into Aramaic, Greek and Latin (which is why the compiler of the bibliography has decided not to include it in the list, lest all the rest be overshadowed by it).

Post-Mishnaic times

In the post-Mishnaic history of Jewish culture, already in the Diaspora, Hebrew retained its high prestige and most of its religious uses but other tongues came to be used for most other communicative purposes. In this long period, there are lots of "black holes" in our very knowledge of the use made of translation in the Jewish context, but two non-consecutive periods stand out, in that respect, especially as, in them, translation *into* the Holy Tongue was taken up again and managed to attain a special status, both quantitatively and qualitatively. These were southwestern Europe of the Middle Ages and parts of central and eastern Europe during the Enlightenment and Revival periods. In both cases, not only did translations account for a large percentage of all *texts* produced, but certain cultural and textual '*slots*' were filled mainly, sometimes exclusively, with translated material. In some instances, as in the case of the medieval *maqâmât* (e.g., Drory [298]) and Enlightenment fables (Toury [1275]), translating served as a means of *experimenting* with, and later introducing in original composition, texts of types which had been hitherto unknown in Hebrew.

The Middle Ages

Following a long interval, translation into Hebrew was resumed in medieval Europe and was in full swing by the end of the 12th century. Most of the texts translated were now 'Works of Wisdom', i.e. scientific texts (according to medieval conceptions of 'science', of course). This was first and foremost a reflection of Hebrew being the only common language for Jews living in different territories, where different vernaculars were spoken and different languages were used in writing, and hence a response to a true need of the receiving culture.

Translating 'Works of Wisdom'

Indeed, many of the Works of Wisdom that were first selected for translation were treatises on Jewish law (*Halakha*) and ethics (*Musar*) written in Arabic by Jews in Muslim Spain or North Africa. There was precious little need for translation as long as the readership, too, shared Arabic as a cultural language. However, by the 12th century, Jewish families which had moved to Christian territories, most notably in today's southern France and northern Italy, had lost touch with Arabic, and their descendants were no longer able to even read it, even when written in Hebrew characters. Interest in the achievements of Jewish scholarship in the acknowledged center remained strong, and a pressing need to have the texts translated thus emerged. Since there were very few who had both Arabic and the local vernacular, the only real solution was to have the texts translated into Hebrew, normally the only language a prospective translator and his commissioner/customer had in common. Somewhat paradoxically, the fact that Hebrew as such had been enjoying high prestige in Jewish consciousness would impart a measure of almost religious canonization to many of the translations done into it in the Middle Ages.

A recurrent pattern, even though not an exclusive one, was to have a treatise translated at the request of an interested patron, who merely required that the prospective translator be reasonably fluent in Arabic, probably by his own testimony. I know of no explicit mention of remuneration, but it stands to reason that at least some translators received some payment, either from the individual commissioners or maybe from the local congregation, in which the affluent commissioners often occupied key positions. Among the most prestigious, most influential translations of Jewish Works of Wisdom completed during this period we find Baḥya ibn Paquda's *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* (Duties of the Heart), Moses Maimonides' *Moreh Nevukhim* (Guide of the Perplexed), and Judah Halevi's *Ha-Kuzari*. Later on, these works also became favorite objects of research and writing, mainly historical (including the history of science), philosophical — or linguistic.

Interest in scholarship did not remain restricted to Jewish works. Rather, it soon spread to non-Jewish fields of knowledge, which led to numerous translations

into Hebrew of works of philosophy, logic, grammar, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, physics, and various other medieval sciences. Here, Arabic was often a *mediating* language only, especially for texts originally written in Greek and Latin. Other source languages were added at a later stage and were mostly approached directly.

Hebrew translation of Works of Wisdom in the Middle Ages has enjoyed wide scholarly interest and coverage ever since the beginnings of the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* [the German-Jewish forerunner of Judaic Studies] as a scholarly branch aspiring for autonomy in the middle of the 19th century. The culmination of this coverage was Moritz Steinschneider's monumental book (xxxiv + 1077 pages!) of 1893 *Die hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* [887], which is still the "Urim ve-Thummim" in the field. Not in vain has this volume been reprinted in 1956, and it is hardly surprising that obtaining a copy of the reprint is almost as difficult as obtaining a copy of the first edition. As we were told in the Compiler's Preface to the present bibliography, an internet site which will host the contents of the book in the form of a database in various languages is under way at http://www.mith.umd.edu/steinschneider/. A partial list can also be found in Halkin's entry for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* [447].

All this notwithstanding, there is still a lot to be done here too, research-wise, even in terms of salvaging texts from the manuscripts they are buried in, not to mention the preparation of authoritative editions thereof.

Translating 'Works of Beauty'

Medieval translation of Works of Wisdom was complement by translations of 'Works of Beauty', the medieval precursor of our 'literary works', where source language became variegated very soon. However, with very few exceptions, this sector had to wait longer before it started being researched, and even today, it is still on the margin of scholarly attention.

All in all, the translation of 'literature' has had a considerably smaller impact on Jewish life and culture than 'scientific' translation. To be sure, great parts of it never made it into Jewish 'collective memory', and many of those which did were then eradicated from it, often for hundreds of years, some — only God knows how many — maybe for good. What is clear today is that the translation of Works of Beauty was a much more common, and certainly more significant practice than we have been led to think, due to a long tradition now receding of devoting both cultural and scholarly attention to 'serious' phenomena only and determining their seriousness retrospectively, according to the interests and norms of those who do the looking-back rather then the cultural constellation of the period itself.

True, many types of 'literary' texts were considered inherently inferior in the Middle Ages themselves, at best on the threshold of legitimacy, and Jews indulged

in their translation into Hebrew with some reluctance; whether they did it for personal diversion or in an attempt to fill some slot in the literary sector of their culture which they felt was unduly poor. However, it seems reasonable to assume that many of the translations that did exist at the time simply failed to reach us. Not having been submitted to copying and recopying, like many of the 'scientific' texts, very few of them existed in more than one copy to begin with, and those single copies were soon lost because nobody had any real interest in keeping them. The number of literary translations which were subsequently (i.e., after the invention the printing press in the 15th century) considered as deserving to be printed and reprinted, thus escaping the general fate of 'literary' translations, was even smaller. Finally, when Hebrew medieval texts became an object of scholarly interest within modern Judaic Studies, it was again first and foremost 'scientific' writings which were taken into consideration, (re)printed and submitted to study. (And see how relatively small the Section entitled "Verschiedenes" [miscellaneous] in Steinschneider's book is, which lists a lot more than just 'literature'. See also Schirmann [801].)

A significant exception to this rule was *Maḥbarot Iti'el*, the Hebrew translation by Judah Al-Ḥarizi of Al-Ḥariri's *maqâmât* in Arabic. Al-Ḥarizi undertook the translation as a preparatory exercise for writing a Hebrew collection of *maqâmât* of his own entitled *Taḥkemoni*. Probably as a result of the canonization of the *maqâmât* in Arabic literature, as well as Al-Ḥarizi's own prestige, *Taḥkemoni* came to be held in high esteem in Jewish culture and *Maḥbarot Iti'el* was also remembered fondly. Other literary translations which enjoyed considerable fame and distribution, some of them even a certain amount of prestige, include Abraham ibn Ḥasdai's *Ben ha-Melekh ve-ha-Nazir* (= *Barlaam and Josaphat*), *Kalila ve-Dimna*, *Mishle Sendebar* (a version of The Seven Sages) and the *Alexander Romance* (see e.g. Dan [283]). They were also among the first to be selected for study, and considerable scholarly effort was devoted to them time and again; very often instead of launching research into new texts which may not have had the necessary legitimization.

The relegation of medieval 'literary' translations in scholarly work has lately begun to show signs of weakening, as witnessed, for example, by the 1969 printing of a 1279 unfinished Hebrew translation of *King Artus* with cultural and historic commentary and an English translation of the text (Leviant [587]), or the 1981 reprinting of a 1541 partial translation of *Amadis de Gaula* with a comprehensive preface, an English version of which was also published separately (Malachi [1095]). Needless to say, the very publication of unknown or rare texts often breeds new research (see e.g. Piccus's work on *Amadis* [1108]), so there is still a lot to look forward to.

In 1998, a collection of 13 medieval stories and fragments in Hebrew was published under the title of *The Knight, the Demon and the Virgin* [705]. It contains

a nice mixture of original and translated texts. In fact, it is not always easy to distinguish between them, and it may well be the case that some of the assumed originals actually came into being via translation, only their original versions got (permanently?) lost. This collection was intended for the general reader in Israel, but it doesn't seem to have fared too well. The hostility of the local press, which observed the book from a contemporary point of view, with very little historical perspective, didn't help much.

Typical apologetics

Many medieval translations were preceded by (often rather lengthy) prefaces, some of them amounting to minor treatises on translation. Those prefaces tended to be overwhelmingly apologetic in tone. This may be explained in terms of the problematic image of translation in traditional Jewish culture, where the long-standing resistance to the secularization, if not desecration of the Scriptures by translating them into a 'foreign' language had undergone generalization (see above). Hebrew translators of the Middle Ages often felt obliged to ask the reader's forgiveness for indulging in the very act, especially if initiated by the translator himself. Many felt obliged to apologize for tackling the particular text they undertook to translate: in the case of Works of Wisdom, mainly on the basis of their alleged limited familiarity with the subject-matter, in the case of Works of Beauty — on the basis of the wide-spread apprehension of the texts as mere 'idle talk'. Finally, apologies were sometimes offered for the kind of language used in the translation, whether out of choice or out of necessity. These translators may or may not have had genuine reasons for apologizing, but their over-indulgence in apologetics should be seen first and foremost as a convention of the time, as corroborated by so many recurrent patterns in the prefaces themselves: thematic, structural and linguistic.

The prefaces also offer important insights into prevailing views of the nature of translation, its difficulties, and the proper ways to handle them under the conditions of the time. Huge gaps existed between theoretical observations and normative pronouncements on the one hand, and actual translational behavior on the other, and the translators themselves were not totally blind to such discrepancies. Many of the problems encountered stemmed from the recurring need to translate from a language which was both rich — and well suited to the communicative purpose at hand, into a language with a rather small repertoire, an inevitable outcome of its having been so long confined to a limited range of uses, and ones that hardly concurred with the nature of the texts to be translated, mainly liturgical uses. When the original was written in Arabic, additional problems arose from the family resemblance between the source and target languages, which could be used to enrich the receiving language but which often led the translators astray

against their expressed will. Obviously, it is more difficult to keep the languages involved in an act of translation apart and prevent their interfering with each other when the two are very close than in cases where they are remote, or very different: in the second case, deviations from normality tend to stick out and invite the translator to monitor them.

Translation strategies

Generally speaking, medieval translators had two very different strategies to choose from, and the choice they made seems to have been rather disciplined. It depended, first and foremost, on the prestige of the text submitted to translation and/or the position the prospective translation was intended to occupy in the target culture (two positions which may or may not concur). Translators of 'important' works — generally 'scientific' texts — usually chose to stay very close to the original, mainly Arabic wording, replacing small, relatively low-rank segments — often single words, sometimes even mere morphemes — one at a time in a rather linear fashion. The resulting text consequently mirrored the structure of the original. In an attempt to reduce the gap between the lexical repertoires of the two languages, new Hebrew words were often coined, either through direct borrowing (albeit always with a measure of adjustment to Hebrew morphophonemic rules) or by way of loan-translation, i.e., by replacing low-level elements of Arabic, first and foremost morphemes, by their close counterparts in Hebrew and combining the resulting entities into (possible but as yet non-existent) words. The Hebrew texts thus abounded in instances of interference at all levels; both deliberate, or at least controlled, and accidental.

By contrast, when it came to 'literary', and other less-privileged texts, the translators refrained from sticking very closely to the original. Here, truly new words were seldom coined. By contrast, foreign (mostly non-Arabic) words were occasionally borrowed, transliterated = and used in the Hebrew text with minimal adjustment to Hebrew phonetics but hardly any to its morphology. Nor was there any attempt to have their foreignness concealed, let alone disguise them as Hebrew words. On the contrary: it was often emphasized by the use of a different font.

The two strategies can be seen most clearly in texts which can be described as ambivalent, i.e. texts which lend themselves to both scholarly and literary reading, especially if they were translated more than once; for example, *Ha-Kuzari*, which was sometimes translated as if it were pure science and sometimes as if it were basically literature (Baneth [176]).

In retrospect, the strategy adopted for the translation of scientific texts as scientific texts proved truly innovative; and not only on the content or text-type plane, but also in purely linguistic terms. Originally a clear case of 'translationese', the resulting structures and lexicon were gradually assimilated into the Hebrew

language at large. What came to be known as 'Tibbonid Hebrew', after the most influential family of medieval translators, crystallized as a language variety in its own right: not just a legitimate variety but one which has come to be considered most appropriate for a number of uses; first in translations, then in non-translations too. By contrast, the way literary texts were translated never underwent any institutionalization. They had very little impact on Hebrew culture in general, or Hebrew literature in particular, and next to none on the language.

In between the medieval and the modern

Translation into Hebrew continued in Renaissance Europe, now mainly in Italy, which became a new center of multilingual Jewish culture. However, interesting as each instance of translation made between the 16th and the 18th century may be, whether in terms of choice of genre, author, text, or even translation strategy (including variation in the language of translation and the varying modes and extent of 'Judaizing' the texts), translation was hardly noticed as a distinct cultural activity during that period. Thus, there is no wonder that the inventory of rather rich private libraries owned by Italian Jews at the close of the Renaissance (Baruchson [1037]) shows very clearly that affluent Jews were keen to include Hebrew texts in their collections, but that very few of those were translations, let alone contemporary ones.

More importantly, unlike the Middle Ages, Hebrew translation during this interim period seems to have lacked any distinct profile. To the extent that it was performed at all, it certainly lagged behind almost anything Jews did in Hebrew, which, with very few exceptions, was no longer up to European standards anyway. In fact, the label 'Renaissance' is hardy applicable to Hebrew culture of the interim period.

Much of this was going to change with the next fresh beginning, which was intimately connected with the *Haskala*, the Hebrew Enlightenment movement which aimed at bringing Jewish culture closer to the achievements of the surrounding cultures. The new beginning involved yet another territorial shift: the cultural center of the most significant group of Jews in terms of both text production and consumption moved first to Germany, then little by little eastwards. Finally, it also marked the end of interruptions in the evolution of the Hebrew tradition: gradual, rather small-scale changes will still occur, but — from now on — the line of development would be an almost straight one, leading rather smoothly right up to the present.

Another significant development which started in the interim period is that of translating — from Hebrew as well as other languages — into some of the Jewish languages, mainly Yiddish (e.g. Chone Shmeruk) and Judezmo (e.g. Ora (Rodrigue)

Schwarzwald), which started acting as 'literary' languages. This trend would be gathering momentum in the 19th century. A most interesting branch of this development would be self-translation, already practiced in the Middle Ages. This phenomenon has been studied, to a certain extent, especially with respect to some individual manifestations — e.g. texts by Mendele (Perry [1609]), Brenner and Gnessin (Bacon [1952]), Yaakov Steinberg (Cohen [1363]) and Gabriel Preil (Feldman [1399]) but there still is a wide field of action there.

The Enlightenment period

Even the uninitiated forerunners of the *Haskala* in the second half of the 18th century could see that there was virtually no chance of catching up with the 'civilized' world without a major investment in translation. Translating was not only an obvious way of producing texts quickly and in quantity, which is one important way of demonstrating the potentials of a new cultural paradigm, even its very existence. It was also a convenient means of *experimenting* with issues that were thought worthy of treatment in Hebrew by virtue of their association with an established culture of high prestige. However, right from the start a considerable tension revealed itself between these recognized needs and the difficulty of Hebrew to express everything that had been, let alone could have been, formulated in languages and cultures which had had a less interrupted evolution, mostly German.

Some uses of ideology

It was *ideology* which was mobilized to alleviate this distressing tension. The solution came from an ingenious reversal of medieval practices: blatant apologetics which involved an exaggeration of the deficiencies of translation, especially into Hebrew, were replaced by a conscious effort to highlight the power and versatility of the language for translational purposes, even if some false arguments had to be used.

Thus, as early as 1755–6, i.e., before the "official" commencement of the *Haskala* proper, a claim was made in *Kohelet Mussar*, the first modern periodical in Hebrew (Gilon [1979]), to the effect that it was mainly 'Works of Wisdom' — a clear allusion to the Middle Ages, to which a medieval quotation by Judah ibn Tibbon was appended, erroneously attributed to his son, Shmuel ibn Tibbon, thus enhancing the association of the two periods — which were untranslatable. However, the untranslatability of texts of this kind was a function of their subject-matter, and therefore it applied equally well to any language. By contrast, when it came to the translation of 'Works of Beauty' (the claim went on), Hebrew could hardly be rivaled. And, indeed, it is *literary* translation which was to become the

center of attention in the first decades of the *Haskala*, and it no doubt needed encouragement more than anything else.

By constantly asserting the ability of Hebrew to do precisely that which held so many difficulties in store, a supportive atmosphere was created right from the start, which made it possible to pursue a highly ambitious program indeed and to achieve many of its goals.

Reducing the linguistic model

This ideologically-motivated solution was supplemented by another congruent move of far-reaching consequences: linguistic acceptability was posited as a major requirement, to an extreme marginalization of any real attempt, or even wish, to reconstruct the features of the source text; not even the most salient ones, or sometimes those in particular. The priority thus assigned to complying with 'puristic' norms of the language was to protect the emerging new culture from being submerged under the weight of a huge volume of texts which are alien to its basic nature, which would easily be lost that way.

In fact, the linguistic model within which a translator, like any writer of Hebrew in the Enlightenment period, was obliged to maneuver was much narrower than the sum-total of its historical resources, because in the first generations only the language documented in the Old Testament was deemed legitimate. The conscious decision to restrict the language available for use to its oldest, most classical variety was ideologically motivated again: it was part of an overall struggle against anything that smacked of contemporary Jewish Orthodoxy; from the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud, through so-called 'Rabbinical' Hebrew to the use of *Jargon*, the pejorative name given to Yiddish. As the language whose use was now made compulsory had long been dormant, it was a measure of *deliberate archaization* which dominated the emerging culture on the language plane. As is so often the case, this extreme archaization had an important *innovative* effect, so different was it from the language used in previous centuries.

The Bible as a frame of reference was thus reinstated, and not on the language plane alone, but in terms of themes as well; among other things, thanks to the high prestige the Book enjoyed in the German culture of the time; namely, as a *poetic* rather than a religious text (most notably Herder's *Vom Geist der Ebräische Poesie* (1782–3)). Shoham [1996] claims so much as an intention to produce "alternatives for the Bible" — texts which would use the Book merely as raw material and reorganize it totally; an intention (he says) drawing from German precedents such as Solomon Gessner's *Der Tod Abels* (1758), which was itself translated into Hebrew more than once. This may have been further enhanced by the use of basically biblical language in medieval Hebrew poetry, which was still in high esteem as a representative of a second 'Golden Age', in the hope for a third one.

On the language level, the Bible was now regarded as a source of *matrices*, to be filled with new linguistic material, as well as a reservoir of actual *linguistic forms*, to be torn from the text and used as fixed units, with or without connection to the original context (implying that a 'biblical' entity introduced into a new text was not supposed to necessarily act as an allusion and evoke a specific place in the Book. In most cases it certainly didn't!). Moreover, long and complex linguistic chains came to be regarded as most appropriate, that is, as a mark of good style in itself. As far as translations go, they were, in a sense, Hebrew segments in search of source-language items to replace. These long chains were often formed by concatenating a number of phrases from various different sources in the Bible, and this preferred mode of usage obviously narrowed down the available options even further. This might explain the high level of *uniformity* in the texts produced throughout this period, whether translated or non-translated.

To be sure, quite often, translated texts were not presented as translations at all; whether they were always identified by the reading public as ones is not always clear. Be that as it may, it was common practice to assign a translated text first and foremost to its translator. The range of activities, strategies and texts associated with translation was thus both broad and highly diffuse, especially as many compositions which did *not* draw on foreign texts in a one-to-one fashion were still collations of parts of existing texts in another language, or the realization of imported sets of 'formation rules' such as generic models.

The role of German

Given that Hebrew Enlightenment made its début in Germany, it was quite naturally the local culture which was called upon to act as a supplier of texts and models, especially in view of its supremacy among European cultures of the time. In fact, mastery of German was another ideal of the *Haskala* itself. However, rather than turning to the model-culture in its contemporary state, the new cultural paradigm often played it safe by using earlier forms of German culture as a reference point, selecting items and models which had once attained some canonization. Many of the texts and authors selected for translation or imitation had indeed occupied a position near the epicenter of the living German system, but most of them had since been relegated to a more peripheral position, or were considered significant from a historical or educational perspective only. For a period of time, inclusion in a German anthology, even a school-reader — a kind of source which reflects some authority but rarely any current tastes — seems to have been an important factor in selecting a text for translation, the more so as many of those who joined the *Haskala* movement, Jews who came from more eastern parts of Europe, had to learn the language itself, from scratch, or on the basis of their Yiddish, and often came into contact with German texts through such collections.

This time lag is one explanation why no poem of Schiller's and Goethe's, for example, was translated until the first quarter of the 19th century. Both poets later became extremely popular in Hebrew circles and remained so for at least a century (Lachower [1526–27]), often obstructing the translation of more contemporary writers and texts and hence perpetuating, on occasion even increasing time lag and stagnation.

During the first decades of the *Haskala*, translation was largely restricted to short texts or fragments of longer ones; and not only because short texts are inherently easier to handle, especially by the uninitiated (which is what almost everybody was, at that time), but also because they are particularly suitable for periodicals and collections, which is where all first translations and many of the subsequent ones were in fact published. This is partly why it took a long time for short stories and novellas, let alone novels and dramatic texts, to be selected for translation and/or be translated in full.

The status of indirect translation

Quite a number of the German texts which were translated into Hebrew were themselves translations from other sources. Thus, the emerging new culture did come into contact with other cultures as well, but it did so indirectly, mainly through the mediation of German. The intermediate culture quite naturally adapted the foreign texts to its own needs, so that the mediating texts could hardly purport to be adequate representations of the originals. However, a culture which gives such priority to linguistic acceptability in terms of one restricted model and pays so little attention to the features of individual source texts is hardly likely to even *question* the adequacy of such a mediating text.

And, indeed, for a long time, proponents of the *Haskala* never stopped to ponder this point. The overall tolerance for second-hand translation — again, quite a while after the German model-culture had already come to regard it as inappropriate — was reflected in a proliferation of indirect translations, starting in fact with the very first 'modern' translation into Hebrew, which was intended to convince its readers that [biblical] Hebrew was an excellent language for translations (see above). This text was actually put forward as a model translation, and it did, indeed, it anticipated many of the characteristics of the coming decades (Toury [1274]).

It was a fragment (first 66 lines) of Edward Young's *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (1742–5), undertaken in all likelihood by Moses Mendelssohn, translated from Johann Arnold Ebert's German translation (1751ff.) and published in the above-mentioned periodical *Kohelet Mussar* (1755–6[?]). Thus, even a personality such as Moses Mendelssohn, who could have just as easily translated from the English original, which was not even difficult to

obtain in Germany, adopted the approach favored by the proponents of the emerging new literature when operating on its behalf, which was quite different from his own stance when he operated as a representative of the German culture, including his translations into that language.

During the first decades, most indirect translations were of English and French origin. As a result, many ideas of the French Revolution, for instance (e.g. Shaanan [1239]), reached the Hebrew reader in a mediated and mitigated form. Those few non-German texts that were translated directly rather than via German seldom made it into the new culture, let alone its very heart, partly, at least, because they looked like relics of an earlier era (which was not highly regarded anyway) rather than forerunners of a new one.

Shakespeare as a case in point

An instructive example of many of the points made so far is offered by Shakespeare's fate in Hebrew (e.g. Almagor [1169]).

By the beginning of the 19th century, the Hebrew cultural milieu had come to regard the Bard, with whom it was acquainted mainly through German, as a major figure of world literature. However, this appreciation in reality amounted to little more than paying lip-service to Shakespeare's importance in an attempt to emulate 'modern' cultural attitudes, and for a long time Shakespeare's position vis-à-vis Hebrew literature itself remained marginal. It was probably not until 1816, i.e., almost 50 years into the *Haskala* period, that the first excerpt of a Shakespearean text was published: 15 lines from a monologue from *Second Part of King Henry IV* used as an example in *Melitsat Yeshurun*, Shlomo Löwisohn's poetics of Hebrew literature, mainly the Bible(!), and this excerpt was certainly not translated directly from the English.

Between 1816 and 1874, when a Shakespearean play (*Othello*) was first translated in full, and from the original, only monologues and other short passages had been translated, all of them from Shakespeare's tragedies, and every single one was almost certainly indirect. Moreover, the fragments were normally presented and accepted as instances of *poetry*. By contrast, no sonnet — Shakespeare's main achievement as a writer of poems — was translated until 1916, most probably because Hebrew had had a virtually uninterrupted sonnet tradition of its own and hence no urge was felt to experiment in this genre (Toury [1725]: Chapter 6).

Most 19th-century translations of Shakespeare were made by *minor*, if not totally *obscure* figures from the central European center, and none of them won any fame or prestige through their Shakespearean translations, among other things — because most of them were published in *marginal periodicals*, so that the great majority of the few fragments that did appear in print went virtually unnoticed. Significant is also the fact that the first full translation which was made directly

from the English was still initiated in central Europe (by Perez Smolenskin), performed by a Russia-born (converted) Jew who went to Britain via a sojourn in German-speaking areas, and the book itself was published, advertised, sold and read almost exclusively in central and eastern Europe. In spite of Cohen's monograph [1362] of this translator, Yitshak (Eduard) Salkinsohn, his role in the history of translation into Hebrew still awaits proper assessment, which was denied from him mainly because he indulged in missionary activities. (Among other things, he also translated the New Testament into Hebrew.)

Taking leave from the Enlightenment period

To sum up: no single translation undertaken during the *Haskala* period, and no single translator, stand out as instrumental in the evolution of Hebrew culture. At the same time, it is clear that translation as a privileged mode of generating texts, alongside the cumulative volume of translation production, had an enormous impact on its course. One of the most outstanding domains in this respect is no doubt *children's literature*, the like of which Hebrew had hardly had before: it was modeled almost exclusively on the German example (e.g. Zohar Shavit [1245]). In spite of the relative brevity of close contact between the two cultures, traces of older German influence can be observed in certain areas of Hebrew culture and language to this day; the more so as German went on being an important cultural language among Jews even when it was no longer the first or second language they had, e.g. east European Jews who wished to attend German universities.

During the whole period, interest in contemporary (and future) translation was supplemented by growing interest in past achievements. And, indeed, thinking and writing about this topic, especially on the level of the individual translational endeavor, has been growing incessantly, especially in the framework of the newly-established *Wissenschaft des Judenthums*. In fact, it is only since then that one can talk in terms of translation *scholarship*. Gradually, a small group of experts on Jewish translation came into being (most notably, Moritz Steinschneider, Abraham Geiger, Abraham Berliner and Leopold Zunz), especially towards the end of the 19th century. Unlike the Middle Ages, those writing about translation were no longer expected to do translation themselves, not even when contemporary translation started being commented upon, reviewed, and then studied. This was a first significant step towards professionalism, which will be playing an ever increasing role in later times.

The revival period

During the 19th century, the cultural center gradually moved further east, first

within the German *Kulturraum* [cultural domain] itself and then out of it and into the Slavic region. Subsequent generations witnessed frequent changes of attitude and behavior, but all in all, evolution was now proceeding more smoothly and translational norms came closer and closer to those which operated in the majority of European cultures, even though they only caught up with them in the second half of the 20th century (Weissbrod [1766]).

The role of Russian

The gradual shift eastwards inevitably brought Hebrew writers into contact with ever new, culturally different groups. These contacts had two complementary effects: with the new cultures in the background, new "gaps" were being identified in the Hebrew culture (relative to what those other cultures had) and, at the same time, a variety of options for filling them also presented itself. Nor were the gaps which were noticed now confined to text-type, theme and composition as they had been before. Most notably, they now manifested themselves on the language plane as well.

Thus, in view of the new tasks it had to perform, the current form of Hebrew was no longer regarded as adequate, or even sufficient, not even by way of ideologically-motivated wishful thinking. It soon became clear that many institutionalized modes of behavior, including those imported from German a few decades back, could not fulfill the new needs and had to be replaced. Starting in the 1820s, Russian had gradually become the closest available system, and it was this culture which would now present Hebrew with most of its new challenges and provide most of the options for meeting them. The behavior of Hebrew in relation to Russian during this period, which has come to be known in Hebrew historiography as the Revival period, involved much more than a mere recognition of the ease of gaining physical access. Rather, the Russian culture became highly available for Hebrew in terms of the *legitimacy* assigned to leaning on it. In fact, it has sometimes been claimed (e.g. by Even-Zohar [1392–93]) that Hebrew behaved as if the Russian system were part of it, and a dominant part at that.

Russian also became the main source of texts for translation; again, both Russian originals and translations into it. Indirect translation was still common, and at least one important literary complex, Scandinavian writing of the end of the century, was imported into Hebrew almost exclusively in a mediated form (Rokem [1623]).

Especially since the 1860s, when the dependency patterns had already been established, the new paradigm which took shape gradually replaced the previous one based on German and was to dominate Hebrew culture for many generations, long after the center had moved out of Russia again. On the face of it, Hebrew purism was still strongly advocated, and practiced, albeit no longer on the basis of

any single variety. However, the underlying model which was now applied to both original writing and translation, regardless of source language, was in fact highly Russified. This contributed a lot to the enrichment and diversification of the repertoire available to the writers of Hebrew. Among other things, it made it possible for the first time to create a kind of (artificial) spoken language. Despite the fact that Hebrew had barely started to be used as a spoken language again, the establishment of a kind of differentiation between 'written' and 'spoken language became more and more of a need, especially in contemporary prose fiction and in drama which were now being translated.

Extending the range of options available to the writer and translator, now often one and the same person, made it possible to narrow down the concept of translation and increase the relative weight of dependence on the source text. The borderline between originals and non-originals thus became clearer and clearer, and translations no longer pretended to be original writings, as they did during the German period; if anything, it was now original texts which were largely based on imported models. Russian interference in the translation of individual texts as well as in the composition of non-translated ones thus played an important role in the very revival of the language; a stronger, longer-lasting role than the one German had played in the 18th century and almost as strong as the one Arabic had had in the formation of 'Tibbonid' Hebrew.

The role of Yiddish

All these trends were further reinforced by the close contact which now developed between Hebrew and Yiddish, that Jewish language which had been regarded throughout the *Haskala* period as corrupt German, to be abandoned in favor of Hebrew and/or pure German. Yiddish, especially in its eastern varieties, was now rapidly becoming a literary language in its own right. Not surprisingly, it, too, was increasingly being modeled on the Russian example, a fact which acted as a catalyst for the overall 'Russification' of the Hebrew culture.

It has been noted that, for a long time, Hebrew and Yiddish behaved as if they were two components of one and the same culture, basically a canonized and a non-canonized, or 'high' and 'low' systems, respectively. This relative positioning of the two is also evident in translational behavior of the time. Thus, it didn't take very long before Yiddish texts began to be translated into Hebrew, often by the authors themselves (see above). Moreover, this measure was not taken as a means of increasing the readership of the books (the potential reader of Hebrew in eastern Europe could normally read Yiddish anyway whereas a growing number of speakers of Yiddish could hardly read Hebrew any more), but as a deliberate attempt to enhance their cultural *prestige*. This process helped to fill many lacunae which were still felt in the Hebrew culture.

Writing about translation

In the Revival period, writing about translation in the Jewish context became even more extensive than before. It no longer applied almost solely to ancient and medieval practices, practitioners and texts, but also to more modern, even contemporary translation(s). At the same time, a differentiation gradually occurred between *scholarly* and *critical* writing on translation, both of which were becoming more and more 'respectable'. Research for the first kind of writing was conducted throughout the western world, by Jews and non-Jews alike, and published in a variety of languages; the second activity concentrated in the changing Jewish centers and was published mainly in Hebrew or Yiddish.

   An interesting, quite pioneering example of critical writing was the close analysis of Shaul Tchernihovski's translation of Goethe's "Wanderers Nachtlied" (actually, one of its Russian adaptations), published by Akiva Wendrow in *Ha-Magid* 9:18 (3.5.1900): it reflects that which readers of translations at an advanced phase of the Revival period regarded as more and less important in a translated poem, both in terms of its being a text in the target language and a representation of another text in a different culture and language.

The 'Israeli' age

Towards the end of the 19th century, with the rise of Zionism and the first waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine (Eretz Yisrael), the center of Hebrew culture started to move back to the ancient homeland. The immigrants of the first *Aliyyot* had mostly been brought up in the Russified tradition, and the writers and translators among them carried on their activities in the new environment. Consequently, many of the old habits were perpetuated, especially as most of the readership was still in Europe. In the difficult years of World War One, literary translation in particular became an important means of supporting the Jewish intelligentsia, and many elaborate projects were put forward by various institutions for that purpose. Most of the projects were never realized in full, but these activities nevertheless led to a substantial increase of translation production (Shavit and Shavit [1678]).

   At the beginning of the 20th century, a secondary cultural center was established in the United States by a similar group of immigrants from eastern Europe. This short-lived center never became a serious rival of the 'Israeli' one, and its main historical significance lies in that it first supplied massive financial aid to the latter, and subsequently provided it with a number of writers and translators who were well-versed in English and its literature (e.g. Shimon Halkin (Shahevitch [1669]), Hillel Bavli (Malachi [1574]) and Israel Efros)). Many of those later moved to Palestine, by which time the local scene was ready to absorb them as the language

of the British mandate over Palestine (1917–48) had become current in the country.

Indeed, English soon became the main source for translation, including indirect translation 9which was becoming rarer and rarer). However, British and American texts were still translated in the old fashion, i.e., into the Russified variety of the language, and therefore looked as if they had originally been written in Russian. Some of the texts were even shortened and edited to better fit a Russian model. (For the sifting of a German text through a very particular Russian model see Toury [1729]; for the influence of Soviet literature in the 1940s see Toury [1733].) Towards the middle of the century, a struggle for domination ensued between the old Russified models and a whole set of new options associated with Anglo-American practices. The struggle was finally settled in favor of the latter.

To be sure, the supremacy of the Palestinian/Israeli center was not fully established until the destruction of Jewish culture (in both Hebrew and Yiddish) had taken place in the Soviet Union and some six million Jews had been murdered by the Nazis. These events resulted in Hebrew culture becoming practically mono-territorial again; in other words: an Israeli culture which is mostly (even though not solely) written in Hebrew and almost exclusively sold and read in Israel itself. Writing in other languages has had its ups and downs but it was normally rather marginal, culturally speaking, unless directed to the world at large, which often involved attempts to get published abroad. For that reason, most authors immigrating to Israel have tried to switch to Hebrew, or at least find a way (and financial means) to translate their texts, or have them translated, into the language of the majority. To a certain extent, this is also true of writers of Arabic in the country, both Arabs and Jews: some of them translate themselves, the rest act as more or less professional translators for others ('Amit-Kokhavi [1307]).

By this stage, Hebrew had developed a number of spoken varieties, including slang, on its way to self-sufficiency. However, written Hebrew continued to resist these varieties for quite a while. Translation took even longer to start simulating the new varieties of Hebrew instead of using the artificial ones it had been using, and it is only recently that the whole gamut of linguistic options which exist in reality began to be used in Hebrew translations (Ben-Shahar [e.g., 1335, 1340]). The emergence of translational norms which involve drawing on all varieties of Hebrew has increasingly made it possible to approximate the verbal formulation of the source text, and there even is a substantial subculture now which prefers 'foreignizing' to 'domesticating' translations — as long as the substrate is English; out of choice, that is, and not a mere mishap, an involuntary result of linguistic impotence.

Writing about translation: Recent developments

Finally, writing on translation has become more popular than ever, in the general cultural domain as well as in academia; again, both in Israel and out of it. One of the first Hebrew outlets for serious and detailed articles on translated works, a mixture of scholarly and critical writing, was the periodical *Behinot* (1952–57) edited by Shlomo Tsemah. Many of these articles still deserve to be taken seriously, and not just because of their 'historical' value.

One important boost for research in translation in Israel was the creation of a number of Translation Programs, first at Bar-Ilan University (Ramat-Gan), then in various other universities and colleges, as well as optional courses in translation within of number of existing literary programs, mostly on the graduate level. While the main task of such programs was, and still is, to train practicing translators, they also produced a lot scholarly work; first as an almost accidental byproduct, then as an integral part of the curriculum. Most of these studies exist in the form of MA and doctoral dissertations only, and it is a pity that the present bibliography could not list them all.

All in all, there is now a great variety of people writing about translation in the Jewish context; mainly about translation into Hebrew, but from it too, as well as translation involving Jewish languages. The latter are no longer confined to Yiddish, as used to be the case before, but include other Jewish languages too, most notably Judezmo (e.g. studies by Ora (Rodrigue) Schwarzwald) and Judeo-Arabic (e.g. studies by Yitzhak Avishur). Moreover, a growing number of those writing about translation have had academic training, in Israel or out of it; normally in areas such as languages, philology, linguistics, literary studies and literatures, or philosophy. The fact that some of them chose to write about translation, permanently, or even for short while, testifies to a constantly growing interest in the field coupled with a chronical lack of trained experts to cater for that need.

It is only in the fourth quarter of the century that a group of scholars emerged, mainly in Europe and Israel, whose expertise lay in translation as an issue in itself rather than a mere extension of another domain. The study of translation has finally become independent. It so happened that Israel became a center of Translation Studies world-wide (see Weissbrod [1774]) and the influence of the new scholarly paradigms has been gradually permeating work on translation which is carried out within other disciplines as well as non-scientific activities such as reviewing translations for the general reader.

A view to the future

These last developments have had an enormous impact, both quantitative and qualitative, on writing about translation in the Jewish context, in Israel as well as elsewhere: more and longer articles, full-scale books, denser coverage than ever — and the greatest possible variety. It is my contention that this tendency will continue. The present bibliography will no doubt be of great value in taking stock of the current state of affairs as well as charting maps for the future, i.e., identifying areas which are still understudied, maybe even totally unstudied, and differentiating between the topical and the dated.

The next logical step would be to collect all the texts mentioned in the list in one place, making it into a center for translation studies in the Jewish context. Will any library take up the glove?

Note

* A first version of the portions dealing with translation itself, under the (slightly misleading) title "Hebrew Tradition" (in the singular!), was included in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* edited by Mona Baker (Toury [140]). I wish to thank the Publishing House and the Editor for their kind permission to base the present essay on that entry. — Numbers in square brackets refer to the bibliography itself.